

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 92

By Herron

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mr. Irby Cooper of
Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Mr. Irby Cooper; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a distinguished citizen of the state of Tennessee, Mr. Cooper was a highly respected member of the Memphis community; and

WHEREAS, born in Memphis, Irby Cooper attended Snowden Junior High School and Central High School and earned a bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper served with acumen as founder and chairman of the Cooper Companies, Inc., a hotel development and management company; he had also distinguished himself as a philanthropist and a political activist; and

WHEREAS, Irby Cooper worked assiduously to advance Cooper Companies to its present illustrious position: a multi-million dollar business that owns and operates twenty-two

hotels in eight states, and has annual revenue exceeding \$100 million and more than 2,100 employees; and

WHEREAS, after leaving his job as a sports writer for *The Commercial Appeal* in 1954, Mr. Cooper formed Cooper Realty Co. and began building affordable homes in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, he also founded construction, insurance, property management, and hotel management businesses, which in 1984 became Cooper Companies. Irby Cooper served astutely as president of the Home Builders Association and developed apartments, office buildings, and hotels; and

WHEREAS, he developed his first hotel in Gatlinburg; this facility was the 200th Holiday Inn in the chain and the first Holiday Inn resort hotel when it opened in 1961 with one hundred rooms. The Gatlinburg Holiday Inn now has 402 rooms and is the largest hotel in the Cooper Companies portfolio; and

WHEREAS, currently, Cooper Companies is the ninth largest Holiday Inn franchisee with eleven Holiday Inn brand hotels. The company also holds four Hilton hotels, two Homewood Suites and a Hampton Inn and Suites hotel; in addition to these impressive accomplishments, Mr. Cooper successfully launched Garden Plaza Hotels in 1985; and

WHEREAS, throughout his remarkable life, Mr. Cooper's advice was highly sought after and much revered; he always found time to donate his considerable knowledge, wisdom, and abilities as a pillar of the community; he loved people and never shied away from helping others; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper generously lent his many talents to various good causes; he served with distinction as president of the Boys Club in Memphis, Baron Hirsch Synagogue of Memphis, the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Feinstone Yeshiva of the South and Memphis State Rebounders; and

WHEREAS, a vibrant member of the Memphis-Shelby County community, Mr. Cooper served as a member of the boards of the Shelby County Tourism Committee, the Better Business Bureau, Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce, Memphis Jewish Community Center,

and Memphis Shelby County Sports Authority; he also served astutely as a member of the Tennessee Commission for the Arts, Memphis Opera Theatre, and Memphis Orchestral Society; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper had received the City of Hope Spirit of Life Award, the President's Award from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, and the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper was a close personal friend of Vice President and Mrs. Gore; the Vice President described the Democratic Party activist as "an irrepressible life force" whose friendship he and Mrs. Gore deeply treasured; and

WHEREAS, Vice President Gore also stated: "Irby measured his own life not by the value of his business interests, but by the values that give all our lives meaning: his boundless love for his family; his abiding commitment to neighbors and to all the people of Memphis; his devout religious faith and his tireless devotion to the State of Israel"; and

WHEREAS, an enthusiastic supporter of University of Memphis athletics, Mr. Cooper was remembered by longtime friend and former University of Memphis basketball coach, Gene Bartow: "When you lost a game, he was right there as your friend"; Mr. Cooper was also described by longtime friend, Mr. Kemmons Wilson, as a "wonderful friend and fellow"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper was a dedicated supporter of the Baron Hirsch Synagogue and the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Feinstone Yeshiva of the South; in recognition of his stalwart support and many contributions, the boys' high school division of the Yeshiva of the South was renamed as the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys in 1993; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Cooper was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Bernice Schramm Cooper, their five children, Laurie Cooper, Cindy Cooper Ehrenkranz, Debbi Cooper, Pace Cooper and David Cooper, and twenty grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Irby Cooper leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Mr. Irby Cooper, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Cooper.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.